

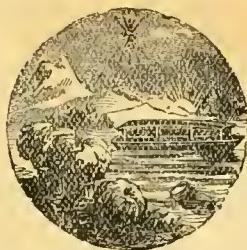
STALWART
AUVER



WHITE MAN'S LEAP

STALWART AUVER

A STORY OF MICHAEL MYERS
ONE OF THE MOST NOTABLE
FIGURES OF BORDER WARFARE
AND EARLY DAYS ALONG THE
OHIO RIVER



By DR. E. R. GIESEY

P. 3
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Dedicated to
MILDRED

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E. R. GIESEY

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PREFACE

Michael Myers, the hero of my story poem, and one of the most notable figures of border warfare, was born in Winchester, Virginia, in 1745. At fourteen he came with his father to near where Monongahela City now stands, and settled on Pigeon Creek. According to Mr. Myer's statement, made in 1850, he had a part in a transaction in 1774, which may have been the opening trouble of the famous "Dunmore" war, immortalized by the eloquent speech of the chief, Logan, which was inspired by a bloody event in that border contest. He took an important part in the battle at Point Pleasant; and was chief of scouts, with Col. Crawford's ill-fated expedition, where he was twice wounded.

Myers was a remarkably accurate shot, was over six feet in height, rawboned and muscular, and had the reputation of being the strongest and fleetest man of the border. His only physical defect was in his speech, on account of which he always prefaced his talk by a drawl, "auver," and he was given, consequently, the cognomen of "Auver Mike," which the author has again changed to Stalwart "Auver," the subject of the poem.

When the Revolutionary war broke out, he was offered a captain's commission in the British army, but refused the same with disdain; and was afterward given a commission as captain in the Continental army, and assigned to scout duty, patrolling from Mingo Bottoms to Yellow Creek. From this service come the incidents recorded in the poem.

Great Granddaughter
Hannah Myers Casey

Toronto, Ont. May 22 - 94

Myers made eleven trips in flat-boats to New Orleans, disposing of his produce and returning overland. Returning on one of these trips, with four others, they were overtaken by yellow fever, and all died, save Myers, who was afterward robbed by banditti, and after being befriended by settlers, in Kentucky, succeeded in reaching home.

He preempted Section 25, on which Toronto, Ohio, now stands, and in 1799 moved his wife and four children from Pigeon Creek, Pa., to his cabin, which was opposite Fosterville, on the river bank. He died at the remarkable age of 107.

The author is so impressed with this wonderful life, that he only regrets, that he has not written a better story.

E. R. G.

“Stalwart Auver”



“Should you ask me, whence these stories,
Whence these legends and traditions,”
With their rythm and running metre,
With their tone of phonic nature,
With their air of noble gentry,
As from book or lore of olden?
I should answer, I should tell you,
“From the homes of the contented,
From the wigwams of the happy,
From the land of Terra-cotta,
From the banks of the Ohio,
Where the warble of the songsters
Cheers the gladsome hours of waking,
And the bull-frog the chug-chug-him,
Mid the milky fog of evening
Keeps the hours with song prolific
In the land of the Torontos.

Where the noonday smile of Phoebus
Kissed the peaceful placid waters,
And his image in the waters
Was reflected back to Heaven,
Like the blessings of the Father,
Through his only Son, The Chosen,
Brightens up the face of mortals,
With reflections sweet, of Heaven.
Where the red man used to wander,

Through the rush and groves primeval ;
Knew no bounds to his dominion,
Knew no fears of an encroachment
From the Paleface, o'er the waters ;
But at night, when chase was ended,
Brought the deer home from the fallow,
Or the salmon from the river,
To the wigwam of his loved ones ;
With monarch'al pride he brought them,
Though his shoulders loathed the burden ;
Yet, the pride within his bosom,
Wrought a smile upon his visage,
As he lay them at the entrance
Of the wigwam, and the children
Gathered round to see the wonders ;
While the mother's mimic frowning
Told him of her heart's approval ;
And her hand upon his shoulder
Sent a mystic thrill athrough him.
As the two hearts beat together,
Like a chordant strain of music
Soothes the heart of one that's weary,
So abode this humble couple,
Aboriginal and happy,
Ere the Paleface crossed the river,
From the land of the Virginias.

But then came his pain and sorrow.
You may call it superstition,
In the red man's fancy hidden,
As he tells to us these stories,
Of these omens, true in nature.

"When the light of Heaven's sunshine
Smiles the brightest, on his children,
And the clouds have donned their richest
Robes of splendor, for the coming,
Of the rich High Priest of Pleasure,
Then the storm cloud like a fury,
Bursting forth in all his terror,
Lightning, in his hand uplifted,
Terror on his face depicted,
Thunder in his voice tumult'us,
Strews the ground with trees uprooted,
As though with the breath of anger.

"When the fur is thickest, softest,
On the raccoon in the Autumn,
Then will come the cruel Winter,
With its bitter lamentations
From the mother and the children,
Pinched with cold and weak from hunger
And the father in his snowshoes
Trudges, weary, through the forest,
Day and night, in quest of forage,
That his loved ones may not perish.
He is ever toiling, toiling;
She is ever waiting, watching;
Hope and fear the balance tilting,
In their hearts so brave, though sinking
With the drear and vain forebodings
Of the dread relentless famine:
So is life in all its phases.
When our lives are smoothest, brightest,
And our hopes are tow'ring highest,

Then may come our sore afflictions,
When our minds are least suspecting."

So it was with fated red man,
When our hero, "Stalwart Auver,"
Left his father, Chieftain Paleface,
Left his mother, Sweet Virginia,
Crossed the river, the Ohio,
Where the brooklet,* "Merry Croxton,"
In the sunlight, of her maiden
Beauty, clad in crystal grandeur,
Pure and simple, bright and happy,
Bounded forth, to kiss her lover,
The Ohio, on whose bosom
She has cast her lot forever.

This is when our hero, Auver,
In whose spirit rankled ever
The monotonous and routine
Life of a Virginia farmer,
Trades it for a life of danger.
Well he loved that tender mother,
Respected his aged father;
But his love was like his figure,
Tall and broad and strong, though rustic;
Born to deal with wilder natures,
Born to breast the storms and dangers
Of the life his heart had chosen.
We, whose dispositions savor
Of a more refined, complacent,

*Croxton's Run.

Longing, for the quiet homestead,
Must not chide him; for his nature,
Could not thrive in our domestic
Way of living, more than we could
Survive in his lonely forest.

Auver left his home and loved ones,
Plunged into the forest, dreary,
With his flintlock,* "Limber Jinny,"
With his cow-horn-flask of powder,
Hanging from his manly shoulder,
By its cord of roe-buck-sinews.
Clad he was in linsey-woolsey,"
Worn in those days, by the gentry;
On his head a cap of bear-skin;
Moccasins, of his own making,
From buckskins, of his own dressing.
These at once his wardrobe, shelter,
To protect him from the weather,
And his trusty "Limber Jinney,"
Was his only shield from danger.

Thus our hero reached the river,
Reached the river, the Ohio.
There he climbed the giant birch-tree,
Stripped it of its coat, and dropped it
To the ground, and followed after;
There with hunting-knife, and hatchet,
Used at once, as tool and weapon,
Made a rude canoe, and launched it

*Called his gun.

On the river, which no longer
Was to separate our hero
For the life his heart had chosen.
Then into the forest going,
Where the Lightnings vent their anger
On the giants of the forest:
There the Lightning, electrician,
Touched the oak tree, with the finger
Of his power, to burst asunder.
There, from out the debris gathered
For his use an oar, from Nature.
Thus equipped, our hero, Auver,
Launched out upon the river,
With this unknown land before him;
While behind him, he is leaving
Youth, and home, and peace, and pleasure.

Stop, and think a moment, reader.
Is there not, some place, some river,
Of necessity or duty,
From whose banks, of happy childhood,
You have shoved your boat, and paddled
Hard, to make the chosen landing
On the beach, of Life's lone desert?
Is there not some event, epoch,
Where your child-life, pure and simple,
Is cut off; and Duty tells you,
You must take up life in earnest?
Yes, 'tis certain all have crossed it:
Some up higher, where 'tis narrow;
Some below, on broader waters,
Where the damp fogs of oppression

Hover 'round the lonely boatman,
As though to confuse or daunt him.
Glide thou on, Oh mystic river,
On your mission, to dissever
Worthlessness from pluck and virtue,
For upon your tide, will never
Float a wreck that's worth the saving.
But stop! This is not our story:
So, we must return to Auver.

These were days when courage, valor,
Was the only refuge given;
To those brave and sturdy pilgrims,
Who must breast the storms and dangers,
To subdue the dreary forest:
When the red man, sly and stealthy,
Trod the hills and valleys over;
Like a sentry on the border
Of the land, where he is ever
Striving, to keep back invaders,
Whom he thinks are crowding westward,
'Til the land is overcrowded
With the paleface; and his axemen,
Hewing down the mighty forest,
Chase the wild deer, the peshikthe,
And the turkey, the pelewa,
From the hunting grounds forever.

Then arose the angry red man,
In his war paint and his fury;
Called his dusky warriors 'round him;
Filled his quiver full of arrows;

Filled the air with imprecations;
Boasted of his strength and valor,
Called our hero, "Little Paleface,"
Ordered him to cross the river.
Then outspoke our "Stalwart Auver,"
Halt of speech, but strong of stature,
Placable and court'ous always,
Ever fond of truth and reason,
Never willing to be driven.
"I am come not to molest you,
Am not angry with the red man,
Covet not your squaws or wigwams,
Came not here to steal your children;
But, in peace, to build my cabin,
Live a quiet peaceful hunter.
"Live and let live, is my motto,
With those, who will act from justice;
But, to threaten and abuse me,
Thinking, such intimidations
Ever scare, or make me weaken,
You are very much mistaken."

So the red man, and the paleface,
In those days of dire contention,
Each one, himself justifying,
Sees the fault within the other;
Is prepared for war and bloodshed.
This may not have been their language,
But it represents their trouble,
When the British, o'er the waters,
Forced the cruel Revolution.

Then our hero, Stalwart Auver,
Ever true to friend and neighbor,
Caring not for toils or dangers,
Is beset, by dire temptations,
As the braided British captain
Calls upon him uninvited ;
Plies him with temptations, proffers
Of position, riches, honor ;
From the crown across the water.
Listen how the braggart argues
To our hero, Stalwart Auver.
“Now my friend, the war is on you ;
And the British, with great armies,
Are arriving on your borders,
Laying waste your towns and cities ;
And the red man, in his war paint,
Having taken up the hatchet,
Now, is out upon the war path.
Don’t you see how vain resistance,
And how futile are your efforts ?
May you not, before to-morrow’s
Sun shall rise, and smile upon you,
Be a corpse, unmourned, unhonored,
And unknown to fame and glory ?
Why not leave this land of sorrow,
Join at once our noble armies,
Leave this land, that’s blessed with nothing,
Destitute of all that’s noble,
Filled with naught but pain and danger,
Change that gaudy back woods costume
For the scarlet coat that Nature
Deigned your noble manhood worthy ?

Do this, and I pledge my honor,
As a Briton, as a soldier,
I will make you a great chieftain,
Crown your name and fame with honor."

Then our hero, Stalwart Auver,
With this burning, stinging insult
Blazing in his eyes and anger,
Blurted out, or rather stammered,
"Auver-Mike will never, never,
Bend the knee or stoop to conquer;
Cares not for the approbation
Of your king, beyond the waters,
Will not recognize protection
From the foul hands of a tyrant.
Cannot wear your crimson garment
With a character more crimson,
Will not trade for fame and glory
Sacred names, of home and mother.
Cares not, to be called a Briton,
But an honest child of Nature."

Here our hero paused abruptly,
Stooped and plucked a little flower,
From the earth,—a little daisy.
Long he stood, and looked, and pondered,
With the air of one half dreaming,
Gazed intently on the flower,
'Til the Briton, broke the silence,
Thinking Auver undecided.
"Well, what see you; has that daisy
Wrapped your answer in its petals?

Or a through your superstition,
Do you ask it for the answer?"
"No," said Auver, "I was thinking,
It reminds me of the captain:
Fair, and rare, and ornamental;
But no use this side of Heaven.
I was just within me thinking,
What a shame it was to pluck it,
What a shame it is, that Yankees,
Are compelled, such lambs to slaughter."

Thereupon, the captain left him.
He, who like a mortal touchstone,
Grated on our hero's manhood,
Found it all pure gold. Like nuggets,
In that recent state, surrounded
By the sand and loam of nature,
Was our hero, when the tempter
Plied the acids of temptation,
Which could have no pow'r whatever,
But to cleanse, and make them brighten
And reflect the light of Heaven.

Such was each, and every comrade
Chosen by our hero Auver.
Such the Wetzels, such the Crawfords,
Such the Poes, and such the Brady's,
With whom Auver roamed the forest,
Daily sore beset by danger.
These were men whose Spartan courage,
Tried, and trained, and educated
To the habits of the red man,

And their rustic way of living,
Gave their service to their country,
Each on self and God relying.

True and brave must be our hero,
As he scoffs the petty proffer,
Of the Briton from existence,
Bares his bosom to the savage,
Relies on his strength and courage,
And a just God's approbation;
Scorns a timid conservation,
At the price of truth, and justice.

Thus, our hero seemed forsaken,
Seemed alone, despised dejected,
In this lonely land primeval;
Had no friend but, "Limber Jinny"
With no hope, but fight and conquer,
When the Yankees crossed the mountains,
To the river, the Ohio,
There, to build for the protection,
Of their hearths, and homes, and loved ones,
Forts, along the crooked border,
Where the river, the Ohio,
Winding through the lonely mountlets,
Like an undulated serpent,
Basking in the Summer sunshine;
Lying torpid, while is passing
Days canicular, while Nature
Takes away his dusky garments,
Clothes him with a newer, brighter,
Puts new life into his being.

So this river, the Ohio,
Through these days of border warfare,
Is not used for navigation,
By the red man, or the palefaces;
For upon its shores, are lurking
Foes in ambush, ever waiting,
For the wayward, foolish boatman,
Who should launch upon its waters.

Then our hero, Anver, chosen
For his courage and discretion,
For his strength and manly bearing,
And his knowledge of the red man,
Takes the task of daily watching,
Daily watching and patrolling
Hills and dales and river bottoms,
From the military station,
Where the Yellow Creek is rolling
Forth her waters, to the river,
To the famous Mingo Bottoms,
Where another wooden fortress,
Built to guard our baby nation,
From the red man's depredations.

Thus, our Auver daily passes,
From the one unto the other;
Ever listful, ever watchful,
Ever mindful of his duty.
Dressed he was alike the red man,
Quick he was, this child of Nature,
In detecting, and perceiving,
Sound and landmark, strange or foreign,

Not conducive to the welfare
Of the woodsman or his people.
Thus equipped, with "Limber Jinny,"
Long and true and ever ready,
Ever primed and ever loaded,
Ne'er reclining on his shoulder,
Ever in his hands reposing.
Auver did the picket duty,
For the continental army,
From one fort unto the other ;
Kept the red man from surprising
Settlements most unprotected,
By his daily, unrelenting,
Vigil, for his cause and country.

Many times, our hero Auver,
With the quick eye of the eagle,
Sees the unbleached, dried, and silvered
Faces, of the fallen leaflets
Smile in rows across his pathway ;
Or the tell tale weeds or sproutlings,
In unison their heads inclining,
Tell our hero, that the foemen
Pass that way, in seeret prowling.

Many times, the foe audacious,
By this scout was overtaken ;
And was punished single handed,
Ere he reached his destination ;
Ere the red hand of the savage
Was made redder in the life blood,
Of the white man's wives and children.

Once, while he was keeping vigil
O'er his beat, anear our village,
Suddenly, and unexpected,
Came upon the red men drinking,
At the spring which now is running,
Through what now is "Clark's Addition";
With the instinct of the woodman,
Auver broke the news upon them,
Of Old "Limber Jinny's" anger.
Straightway up the red men started,
In their war paint, and their anger,
To avenge their fallen chieftain;
They are scouring hill and valley,
For our hero who has vanished.

Once, while with his friends, out gunning,
*Where, to-day the white men gather,
In devotional assembly;
Where the giant hills are rising,
Like a wan, around the camp ground,
As though to shield, and defend it
From all, save the power of Heaven.
Auver heard the horse bell ringing,
When they from the camp had wandered,
And, when in his ascertaining,
If a wolf had scared their horses,
Saw a red man, stooping over,
Working at the spancel ratchet—
Let us drop these bloody stories,
And pursue his life domestic.

*Hollow Rock Campground.

Ere our hero left the homestead,
On the distant Allegheny,
There, he met his Catherina,
At some husking, or log rolling,
Or some apple butter stirring,
Or some sugar camp, in Springtime,
Where the scent of waking Springtime,
Coming from Dame Nature's censor,
Wraps the soul in mystic pleasure,
Bathes the heart, like thoughts of childhood,
With its soothing "Balm of Gilead."
When the daffodils are waking
From the long sleep of the winter;
And the daisies, in their waking,
Have cast off their leafy covers,
And poked out their little faces,
Where the overhanging branches
Are unfolding to the Father
All the secrets of the Winter.
Then the songsters, with these promptings,
To their instincts, take to mating;
And their mating prompts the instincts,
In the season of "God's Chosen."

With these promptings, came our hero;
With our hero, came these promptings;
And, two hearts, by love made fusil,
Ran the one into the other;
And these hearts, so fused together,
"Man must never put asunder."

Of their courtship, we know nothing:

So, we must remain contented,
In our guessing, how our hero
Rubbed his two great hands together;
Bored his heel into the puncheon
Floor, far beyond which he is looking;
Stammered out his "A-u-v-e-r Katie?"
With his shoulder turned toward her,
"Auver Will you"—Only listen,
How the great, big, awkward, hero,
Of a hundred thrilling ventures
Coys before a simple maiden.
"Auver Will you have?—Say Auver!
Are you sick, or what's the matter?
Shall I bring you some cold water?"
"Auver—No I guess not Katie."
"Then, sit right straight down and tell me,
What has made you sad, and thoughtful?
Has your mother true, and tender,
Died, and left you so dejected?"
"Auver—No, she's all right, Katie."

There he sat, upon the bottom
Of the best tub in the cabin.
Elbows on his knees he rested,
While between his hands, are posing,
Jaws, that never burned more sorely,
Since the days of mumps and measles.
Long he sat, and vainly pondered
O'er the crooked proposition,
With his whole mind centered on her,
Yet, forgetful of her presence.
Long he sat there, gazing blankly,

In the embers, dim and waning;
Seeking, in his listless gazing,
For the picture of his longings.

"Do you ever see things pictured,
In the wan of burning embers?"
Spoke the maiden, interrupting,
As she stood there in the gloaming.
"Do you, in your campfires burning,
In your calm, and thoughtful moments,
See strange pictures, of fierce red men,
In their war dance, 'round their victim?"
"I have often," said the maiden,
"In the long and dreary evenings
Of the winter, with my knitting,
Sat down by our mammoth fire place,
Held communion with an image,
Which to me idealistic,
Makes me happy, and contented
With my lot, so lone and dreary."

Then, our hero Stalwart Auver,
From his lethargy awaking,
Says, he too can see the picture,
With its rare and radiant beauty.
"Can you Anver?" says the maiden,
"Can you? Does it look like Anver?"
Is it tall, and brave, and handsome,
Like the heroes, of fine stories?"
"No," says Auver, "it is handsome,
And as brave as any lion,
And as lovable, and pretty

As the fairies, in your stories.
You have seen it in the brooklet,
When you stooped, to watch the fishes.
Though, you're not a vain Narcissus."

Then, a silence stole upon them,
And they took to fruitless thinking:
All the while, their eyes concentrate'd
On the pictures, in the embers.

Then, the maiden broke the silence,
With this logic, pure and simple.
"If these two can hold existence,
In that fiery heat together,
Could they not withstand the scorchings,
Of a higher heat, domestic?
If these pictures, we are seeing,
Are so beautiful, and lovely,
Would they not shine out the brighter,
If they two were put together?"
"Yes, I think they would," says Auver.
Then, a hand fell on his shoulder,
And his arm stole—Draw the curtain!
Reader they have solved the problem
Which athrough this worthy* paper,
Has been marred, and sorely haggled.
Would you wish to follow further,
Since they've solved this leap year problem?
When this cruel war was over,
And these plighted vows were ended,

*Printed in 1892 in the Toronto Tribune.

In a happy consummation;
Then our hero Stalwart Auver
Built his primitive log cabin,
On the margin, of the river;
And this cabin, weak and puny
Grew to *Newburg, then *Sloan's Station,
Then she married one *Toronto;
It was built of poles and mortar,
Puncheon floor, and clap board thatching,
Riven door, with leather latch string,
Chimney at the end, prodigious,
Built of sticks and mud, while peeping
From the side, a single window,
Made of paper, made translucent,
With the oily oil of brmin.

There he lived, and cleared the forest,
Built his fences, sowed and gathered,
Through these years, while danger menaced,
Till the days of peace and plenty
Made his cabin more inviting,
To his loved ones, four in number;
Then he brought them, to his cabin
Brought them, in a flat-boat drifting
Down the river, the Ohio.

As this couple stood in silence.
Pensive, yet, supremely happy,
Hopeful, yet, with sad misgivings,
Lonely, yet, on each relying,

*Different name for Toronto.

Drifting, yet, to a great purpose,
Were they not, as we would have them,
Brave and true, and good; in keeping
With our pride, and admiration?
Is our hero more heroic,
Than the one, who stood beside him,
On the flat-boat, looking hopeful,
Down the far-out-stretching river,
T'ward the dim, and distant Canaan?
As she views, with him, the falling
Of the sun behind the hilltops,
And the fading beams, auroral,
In the misty, milky twilight,
Like the pointed, and divergent,
Fingers of the "hand of caution,
Is she nervous? Is she daunted?
Does she call it a bad omen?
When they landed, near the cabin,
And their scanty stores were righted,
In their places; and the children,
From their crying and repining,
For the loved ones left behind them,
In their little beds are sleeping,
And she's standing, in the door-way,
Lonesome, waiting for her Auver,
Does she take to useless crying?
Does she scold and chide her Auver,
When he comes in much belated?
Not one word, of angry censure.
Not one word, of discontentment.
Not one word, to make the burden

Of our hero's life the greater,
What it cost to be contented,
What it cost to cheer the homestead,
What it cost to do her duty
To her children, husband, Heaven;
She, and God alone can answer.
Stalwart Auver was a hero,
And we laud him for his courage;
But, no man e'er had the courage
Manifested by the women,
Who have faced the sore privations,
Which our heroine has conquered.

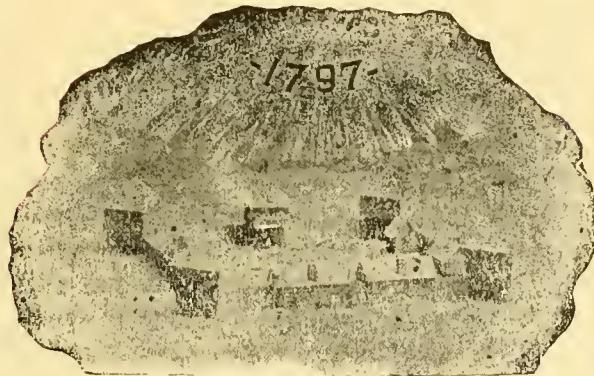
Here he lived and worked and prospered,
Built another habitation,
Larger, stronger, from the quarry,
Of the hillside and the forest.

Gone forever is our hero,
Gone that faithful wife and mother:
Side by side, the two lie sleeping,
Neath the* maples of their choosing;
But, their name and fame still living,
In the hearts of all our people
Is a source of pride and pleasure,
To our willing admiration.
Gone forever is the cabin
And the lovely old stone homestead,
Leaving naught, but fame and honor,
And the famous "Limber Jinny."

*First buried at Maple Groves—since moved to Toronto.

Which the only *grandson living
Keeps with pride, and values highly,
As an heir-loom from "Grandfather."

*Jas. W. Myers, of Toronto.



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